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DEVELOPING ORIGINAL MATERIALS IN READING (A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS).
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GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF ORIGINAL INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUTH ARE PRESENTED. THE TEACHER SHOULD BEGIN WITH A CLEAR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND SHOULD BE GUIDED BY THE OBSERVED NEEDS, INTERESTS, EXPERIENCES, AND CAPABILITIES OF THE CHILDREN FOR WHOM THE MATERIALS ARE INTENDED. THE MATERIALS SHOULD BE READABLE IN TERMS OF THE STATED PURPOSE RATHER THAN IN TERMS OF READABILITY FORMULAS. DECISIONS ON VOCABULARY LOAD, SENTENCE LENGTH, AND COMPLEXITY SHOULD DEPEND ON THE TEACHER'S OWN JUDGMENT AND THE CHILDREN'S VERBAL EXPERIENCE. ILLUSTRATIVE TEACHER-MADE AND PUPIL-MADE MATERIALS ARE GROUPED ACCORDING TO PURPOSE. THE FIRST GROUP CONSISTS OF FIVE TRUE STORIES ABOUT THE WORLD AND PEOPLE WITH WHOM THE DISADVANTAGED CHILD CAN IDENTIFY. THE SECOND GROUP OF MATERIALS DWELLS ON SCHOOL- AND SYSTEMWIDE THEMES AND INTEGRATES THE PRESCRIBED CONTENT WITH NEEDED SKILLS. SAMPLES OF STUDENT COMPOSITIONS CONSTITUTE THE THIRD GROUP OF MATERIALS DESIGNED TO PERSONALIZE INSTRUCTION IN COMPOSITION. MATERIALS WHICH PROVIDE PRACTICE IN SPECIFIC READING SKILLS AND EXPOSURE TO VARIED LITERARY FORMS ARE PRESENTED. A BIBLIOGRAPHY IS INCLUDED. (NS)

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HUNTER COLLEGE
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

GATEWAY ENGLISH

Developing Original Materials in Reading

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Developing Original Materials in Reading

(A Guide for Teachers)

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PREPARATION OF READING MATERIALS BY TEACHERS OF CULTURALLY DIFFERENT CHILDREN

I. Rationale

Because of the special individual and group needs of the disadvantaged, many successful teachers find it helpful to supplement available commercial materials with teacher-made instruments of instruction. It is the purpose of this paper to offer the beginning teacher some guidelines for the preparation of such materials and examples of what can be done.

The practice of preparing homespun materials is by no means universally approved. The writer knows people who have failed the interview part of teachers' examinations because they advocated writing their own stories for classroom use. Some supervisors and curriculum authorities vehemently oppose the practice. They dislike giving this much rein to the individual teacher, and prefer the use of traditional materials: "When you know more than William S. Gray knew about teaching reading, then you won't need the manual."[1]

It is not the writer's purpose to draw up a brief for the creative teacher. It should be noted, however, that at the present time there seems to be no overall policy on this issue in the city schools. In some instances teachers are actually encouraged to prepare a significant portion of their own materials. The writer's experience as a participating teacher in the Junior High School Reading Project was that every lesson was prepared and rexographed to suit the special needs of the group, in spite of his request that material be limited to that already available in the school. Demonstration lessons and reports of noteworthy reading programs often include large amounts of teacher-made material.

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[1] Quoted in Martin Mayer, The Schools, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961.

In view of the fact that the practice is widespread, it would seem that the beginning teacher should devote to it some systematic attention. Inexperienced teachers usually have no specific training in this area, and as a result their efforts frequently fail to meet the needs for which they are designed. The teacher who goes to the library for aid finds a paucity of information, and what information can be found is often inapplicable to the lower-class child, or misleading because of its brevity.[2] Unlike commercial materials, teacher-made materials are usually prepared to meet unique situations, and thus cannot be pretested in actual classroom situations. The teacher's first shot is either a hit or a miss.

The first step is to look at the schools and see what situations now prompt the preparation of special materials by teachers. The expense and time involved are certainly not justified if, as is sometimes the case with the enthusiastic beginning teacher, commercial materials can be used. It is generally better for the teacher to adapt his methods to the available materials than to create materials to suit some inalterable method, assuming that the same results can be obtained.

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[2] An exception is Barbara Nolen and Delia Goetz, Writers' Handbook for the Development of Educational Materials, U.S. Office of Education, Bulletin 1959, No. 19.

There are, however, circumstances which seem to justify the use of teacher-made instructional materials for deprived youth. Some of these circumstances, of course, are common to virtually all educational situations. Among the purposes for which many teachers occasionally create materials are the following:

1. To acquaint students with events, trends, etc., too recent to have been included in commercial materials.

2. To motivate the utilization of commercial materials--particularly, for the language arts teacher, the reading of new library acquisitions, etc.

3. To motivate, recapitulate, and unify individual and group learning experiences.

4. To fill the inevitable gaps in comprehensive teaching units that bring into play a wide variety of commercial materials.

5. To reinforce individual and group effort by reproduction and distribution of student work, both to recognize superior performance and to build confidence in the insecure performer without regard to merit.

6. To provide students with special materials required by the exigencies of our times. In this way the special

"Weeks" devoted by the school system to the observance of worthy causes may be integrated with the teacher's planned series of interconnected learning experiences.

7. To provide students with traditional materials which are unavailable or must be adapted in some way to suit definite teaching purposes.

8. To evaluate learning. Tests are undoubtedly the most common teacher-made instruments, and their function as teaching devices is too often overlooked.

The teacher of disadvantaged children, like any teacher involved in special education, has additional reasons for creating instructional materials. Happily, the needs of these children are now being met with increasing frequency by commercial publishers. The situation is nothing like what it was only ten or fifteen years ago, when some teachers had to create virtually everything. But needs still exist, some of which by their very nature are fully defined only by the unique individual or group, and hence will always remain outside the scope of the commercial publisher. To meet the special needs of the educationally deprived lower-class child, teacher-made materials are used in a variety of ways:

1. To increase student involvement by personalizing instructional materials.

2. To present material which meets the individual student in his own "life space," i.e., material which, to a degree, arises out of the student's cultural milieu in content, vocabulary, and syntactical structure.

3. To provide positive identification models within the student's frame of reference.

4. To provide the student with the stimulation of literary forms other than prose fiction, the darling of the commercial publishers. There is a shortage of narrative poetry, drama, and essays aimed specifically at this group of children. On the other hand, if the content warrants, the teacher may wish to convert difficult materials in unfamiliar literary forms to prose fiction within the understanding of students.

5. To present special material to increase the child's understanding of his cultural heritage. This is a two-way process: the student must be introduced to the fundamental elements of that heritage common to all Americans, as well as to the positive aspects of his own subculture in such a fashion that the relationship to the larger culture is made apparent.

6. To provide the variety in form and motivation needed to sustain the additional practice in the various reading skills required by the disadvantaged.

7. To provide experience in areas of language deficiency peculiar to the individual and not included in conventional texts and workbooks.

8. To teach the vocabulary, concepts, and principles required for minimal understanding of the current social and political scene.

II. Practical Suggestions for the Preparation of Materials for the Disadvantaged

This section will attempt to augment and modify, not to merely summarize, the large body of sound information now available on writing for children.[3] The teacher writing for deprived youth not only has a different audience, but sits down to the typewriter for different reasons. The creation of literary gems is not the teacher's purpose; he has neither time nor energy to spend polishing pearls. His purpose is defined by the observed needs of children in his classroom. It is this purpose that gives shape and substance to the materials he prepares.

This simplifies the problem somewhat. The teacher has to create, or to find and adapt, materials that offer a specific group of children learning experiences that lead toward some specific end.

Care should be taken, however, that the problem is not oversimplified. A little thought at this point will often result in the creation of materials consciously designed to serve more than one purpose. For instance, if the teacher intends to prepare a holiday poem about the children in his class, there is no reason that the poem cannot be made to serve a variety of language-learning functions, such as the teaching of words useful at the holiday season, the reviewing of a recently studied word-attack skill, or the practicing of

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[3] See for instance Erick Berry and Herbert Best, Writing for Children, New York: The Viking Press, 1947; Phyllis Whitney, Writing Juvenile Fiction, Boston: The Writer, Inc., 1947.

English intonation patterns. Every lesson should make some attempt to strengthen vocabulary, improve comprehension, and increase the effectiveness of the reading process, regardless of the particular goals that are called to the student's attention. The teacher's first task in the preparation of materials is thus to formulate a clear, specific and limited statement of purposes.

Defining the purposes of the material will help define its content. The teacher who casually searches for "something the boys will enjoy" might accidentally hit on something, but there is no guarantee that it will provide the boys with anything more than a few moments' amusement. With an adequate formulation of purposes, however, the teacher will find it less difficult to locate or create appropriate materials. This does not mean the task will be easy; it is the fact that the materials are not immediately available that necessitates the effort in the first place.

Once source materials are found or ideas jotted down on paper, the teacher faces the job of organization. Several guidelines should be kept in mind:

1. The interests and experiences of the learner delimit the possibilities of organization. The writer must know in advance what abilities and expectations his reader will bring to the page.

2. A simple and logical plan of organization should be obvious in the finished material. The bones of structure must show, in the form of sub-heads, topic sentences, etc., if the

reader is to relate the parts into a meaningful whole. Particularly if the material is factual, a direct, no-nonsense approach is best. The material should have a single over-all theme and proceed with the clarity of an outline. Excessive motivation, "interesting" asides, and literary devices such as flashbacks are usually to be avoided.

3. Conventional distinctions between fact and fiction tend to blur for the poor reader. The deprived child finds in fiction a large amount of the general information he lacks. On the other hand, he can often be made interested in factual material by the deliberate use of fictional techniques, such as personification, dramatization, and suspense. One of the abilities this reader often lacks, in fact, is the ability to distinguish between fiction and fact.

4. Whenever possible, the general should be presented in terms of the specific. The policeman's day, for instance, is vastly more interesting than the functions of the police department.

5. Incidental humor should be used with caution. Reading is a serious and often grim business to this student. Much of the humor in conventional materials is lost simply because nothing can be "funny" that requires effort of understanding. This does not mean, however, that the light touch cannot be attained. There is a broad general area between pure pie-in-the-face slapstick (which the student likes), and the subtleties of wit (which his teacher likes). Within this area, amusing incidents can arise out of the characteristics of

humorous people, but these incidents should be obvious and extended, not incidental.

6. The beginning must arouse the student's interest or curiosity. It should do this as quickly and as briefly as possible. A good beginning is a necessity. It need not, of course, be written first.

7. As a preliminary check on organization, it is helpful to think through the material from the standpoint of a reluctant reader. This procedure will often disclose poor sequences, rough transitions, and omitted or superfluous material. Time spent here will often preclude extensive revision.

When the teacher has chosen and organized his materials, he is ready to start writing. Now he faces the job of making his material readable. It is not easy for most teachers to write prose that a verbally deprived child will understand. Some teachers find it helpful to separate the writing process into two stages, first making an initial draft in their natural style, then simplifying vocabulary and sentences. Other teachers, however, find the process of simplification difficult, since the vocabulary and sentence patterns, to some extent, determine the structuring of the content. The beginning teacher will have to work out his own method.

Readability is a complex and often misunderstood concept.[4] Attempts have been made to correlate readability with vocabulary load, sentence length and complexity, idea density, the relative percentage of "personal" words, etc. Yet no formula involving such discrete and measurable factors can, in the final analysis, predict readability. It would be easy, for instance, to construct a paragraph on Paris that any "readability formula" would score easy to read, yet would be so poorly organized, choppy, and lacking in euphony that its true readability would be almost nil. Conversely, other paragraphs might be written--although it would not be easy--with such magic that children would read them eagerly, even though their "readability" were far too difficult. Readability formulas do not tell us how readable any given material is; they merely indicate what reading grade a child should have to master its vocabulary load, sentence length, etc. The formulas have some value in selecting commercial material for student use; they have little predictive value for the writer of materials. The writer cannot assume that a good "readability" rating will make anyone want to read his material in the first place.

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[4] Good discussions of "readability" include Edgar Dale and Jeanne S. Chall, A Formula for Predicting Readability (with supplement), Columbus: Ohio State University, Bureau of Educational Research; Rudolf Flesch, How to Test Readability, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951; Nolen and Goetz, op. cit., pp. 103-120.

The idea of "readability" involves other snares. It is often the teacher's purpose not to make the material as readable as possible. Especially in the English class, children are learning to read as well as reading to learn. Children having difficulty with long sentences, for instance, should seldom be offered material containing only short sentences, even though they are more readable. Here again the purpose of the material is the determining factor.

Similar difficulties are involved in the use of vocabulary lists by the writer of classroom materials. Many lists exist,[5] but the writer will soon find that the "borderline" words, for which such lists might be helpful, are included in some lists and excluded from others. The teacher who is in doubt about a particular word would do better to rely on his knowledge of his audience than on any one vocabulary list. The problem is further complicated by the fact that the "easier" words in the language are those which carry the most meanings. In fact, words like man, boy, chair, and table should sometimes be avoided if their use would confuse the reader, in spite of their presence on appropriate vocabulary lists.

Most vocabulary lists are prepared for use with the middle-class child in the elementary grades. They are slanted against the older child from the city slum. Words like swamp and shrub appear on these lists at far lower grade levels than the disadvantaged child can be expected to know them. Also, most word lists reflect the whole-word, basal reader method of instruction. They assume that the child has a large aural-lingual vocabulary, from which certain words can be expected to be known in written form at certain age-grade levels.

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[5] Among the most widely used are those in Dale and Chall, op. cit.; Edward W. Dolch, Psychology and Teaching of Reading, Champaign, Ill.: The Garrand Press, 1951; Henry D. Rinsland, A Basic Vocabulary of Elementary School Children, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1945; and Edward L. Thorndike and Irving Lorge, Teachers' Word Book of 30,000 Words, New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1944.

For the slum child of junior-high-school age, however, this is not usually the case. His reading vocabulary more nearly approximates his listening vocabulary. His "4.5" on a reading test does not mean that he has the same sub-strata reading abilities as a ten-year-old suburbanite. For this reason, it is proper for the teacher preparing his materials to use any word he thinks is known in any form, not just those that would be part of the sight recognition vocabulary of a normal child having the same reading grade.

The teacher's judgment is also the best guide in matters related to vocabulary, such as contractions. Some commercial publishers use contractions liberally; others use them sparingly or not at all. The teacher will have to be guided by the child's previous experience. No general rules can be followed.

When it is necessary or desirable to use words unfamiliar to the disadvantaged city child, they can often be presented in meaningful contexts: "John put the leather bridle on the horse." Occasionally it is possible to virtually define a word: "The guards were friendly and acted more like nice teachers. They were called counselors."

Sentence length and complexity stand next to vocabulary load in the list of factors determining "readability."[6] Here again, the purpose of the material must be considered. If ease of reading is a primary aim, the teacher would do well to stick to the old formula: "Never use a compound or complex sentence when a simple sentence will suffice."[7]

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[6] For a discussion of the importance of sentence length and structure see Arthur E. Traxler and Agatha Townsend, Eight More Years of Research in Reading, New York: Educational Records Bureau, 1955.

Few teachers, however, can stick to this formula, and even the poorest reader in the class eventually grows weary of nothing but short, simple sentences. Furthermore, their exclusive use precludes the possibility of varying the sentences to reinforce whatever dramatic values the material might contain. For instance, short, simple sentences are an effective means of building excitement and suspense before the climax of a story. If the whole story consists of short simple sentences, their deliberate use for this purpose is impossible.

There are other things than the measurable factors that go into "readability" to remember about sentences. Length is more important than complexity. A so-called simple sentence, after all, can go on and on, word after word, phrase after phrase, through comma after comma, in a seemingly interminable fashion--this fashion, in fact--toward its terminal punctuation mark. Also hard for the poor reader are invented sentences, even simple ones. Compound and complex sentences can be used, but they should be closely punctuated. If complex sentences are short, they are acceptable. Sentence fragments too, on occasion.

Other points about sentences have more to do with style than structure. The relationship between sentences must be made clear, even though this involves a certain amount of redundancy. Nouns should be repeated if the use of pronouns might lead to ambiguity or vagueness. The interweaving of ideas from sentence to sentence will not only promote clarity but will keep the reader moving along the line.

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[7] W.B. Featherstone, Teaching the Slow Learner, New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1951, p. 81.

A brief sampling of commercial materials will show that there is no one "style" of writing for the deprived child. The style can be varied within limits determined by the experience and abilities of the reader. Whatever the style, these limits should be kept in mind:

1. The slow reader is used to the narrative pace of television, motion pictures, and speech. One reason for his dissatisfaction with conventional materials is that he cannot read fast enough to maintain the pace he finds emotionally satisfying. For this reason, materials written especially for him must move quickly. The writer must strip his material to its essential features, omitting lengthy descriptions, etc.

2. In his struggle for simplicity, however, the writer must be careful not to omit what is necessary to bring the material within the "life space" of the child. Time and place should be made explicit, for the deprived child is deficient in temporal and geographical understandings. He often fails to respond to conventional clues within the context of the material itself. For example, mention of blue and gray uniforms and reference to General Lee will not suffice to signal "Civil War . . . United States . . . 100 years ago." These things must be stated--and often repeated.

3. The style should be vivid, simple, and direct. The

reader's "suspension of disbelief" is facilitated by the use of real people in actual situations. Fantasy, if used, should be so fantastic that the reader knows exactly what distortions of reality he is asked to make. Stereotypes must often be used, but even here the writer cannot assume that the reader will be familiar with the stereotype at first meeting.

4. Similarly, the poor reader is not familiar with other "signals" obvious to the average child. The writer must often pause to make emotions and plot questions explicit:

> John opened his eyes wide. His mouth dropped open. *He was very, very surprised.* *"What will happen to Dirty Sam now?" he asked himself.*

5. Transitions in time, space, and ideational content must be made obvious. They should be anticipated and spanned as smoothly as possible, since the reluctant interest often tends to wane when shifted.

6. Metaphors are useful, but if they are to add to the material the vehicle must be meaningful and not misleading to the child. Even *threadbare* metaphors can throw the inexperienced reader *off* *stride* and become *bottlenecks*.

7. Every story has an end. If the writer stops as soon as he can after the climax of his story, leaving the reader wanting more, a positive attitude is established toward the next reading experience.

It was suggested above that the writer think through the organization of his material before putting a word down on paper. Now it is imperative that he read the finished material through the eyes of a deprived child who has little reason to be interested in the content. This can be done several times, for difficult and misleading words, for sentence structure, for the sequence of ideas, etc. A final oral reading will usually disclose still more bugs.

If possible, the writer should let some time elapse before the material is typed on a stencil in final form. Two or three days are usually sufficient to allow him to view the material with a fresh and objective eye. Even two or three hours will help, provided the writer turns to other activities in the interim. If this is not possible, another person can be called on to read the material for "short students' books," etc.

III. Examples of Teacher-Made Instructional Materials

These materials were created for certain specific purposes with specific groups of children. They are intended to suggest the possibilities open to the creative teacher; no attempt has been made to provide an exhaustive sampling of all kinds of possible materials. They are here necessarily classified by broad general purpose. Within each lesson, however, a variety of integrated language experiences should be called into play.

1. Materials intended primarily to offer the lower-class child written interpretation of the world he knows and real people with whom he can identify or relate.

The following five true stories and articles were prepared by a teacher for a class of Negro and Puerto Rican eighth graders with a mean reading grade of 4.8. Some of the material is purposefully written both slightly below and above this level. All the stories, however, concern Negro or Puerto Rican characters and proceed as much as possible from experiences common to the group.

The page of questions following each story is intended for student use. It will indicate a rough lesson plan that might be adapted to the immediate and general needs of the student. It is not mandatory that every student be required to answer every question; some provision is made for differing abilities, interests, and needs. The use of meaningful contexts to study vocabulary facilitates the inductive method of word analysis. Other questions stress simple comprehension, interpretation, and evaluation of the material. Putting questions in groups of five or ten (twenty in all) permits use of the question sheet as an easily scored "test" if the teacher so desires.

King of the World

The boy hated school. It was a place where a teacher he didn't like stood up in front of the room and asked questions he couldn't understand. It was a place where everyone laughed when he didn't know the answer. It seemed as if people laughed at him all the time. They laughed at the way he couldn't read. They laughed at the way he couldn't write. They laughed at the way he'd never speak even when someone talked to him.

The teacher was like from another world. Every morning she seemed to have a new dress on. The boy had never seen his mother in a dress like that, not even on Sunday. The teacher would put something on the board and explain it once. Only once. You had to understand it the first time. If not, you were lost.

Worst of all, he hated Fridays. This was assembly day at P.S. 25, Brooklyn. The boys had to wear white shirts and ties. But the only white shirt he could get was an old one of his father's. It was miles too big for a nine-year-old boy, and the tie hung down to his knees. People laughed harder than ever.

One day he didn't go to school. He stayed home and hid in the cellar. There wasn't much to do, but it was better than people laughing at you all the time. The next day, no one seemed to really care where he'd been. So he cut school more and more. Sometimes he'd find a quiet cellar and sleep all day. Other days he'd sneak into a movie or go to Coney Island. He went to the zoo lots, and to Prospect Park. Once in a while he'd get on the 8th Avenue subway and ride back and forth, back and forth, from one end to the other.

Then one day he found a perfect place to hide. It was in the subway, near the High Street Station. You walked down past the end of the platform and climbed up a metal ladder. It led to a little room where workmen sometimes kept their tools. The door was never locked. You could shut the door behind you, and the world would leave you alone. It was dark and dry and safe.

The boy grew to love the darkness. In the dark you were safe. Before long he was staying out all night. There were too many people at home, anyhow. Too many people, and not enough beds. Some nights he slept in the movies, especially if there was a new show the next day. Other nights he stayed up. He could always steal something to eat in the morning and sleep all the next day.

But one night he got in real trouble. He was resting on a rock next to a parkway on Staten Island. The police saw him. It was three in the morning. He tried to run for darkness, but the police caught him. They dragged him off to a police station. Next day they took him back to Brooklyn. He was taken to a police station near his house. He had to wait till his mother came to pick him up.

This wasn't his first trouble with the police. And it wasn't his last. He didn't belong to any gang. He was too shy. All he really wanted was to run and hide and be alone. But they wouldn't let him. Finally they took him to court.

The judge sent him to the Wiltwyck School for Delinquent Boys. His running and hiding days were over.

The boy expected Wiltwyck to be a reform school, with walls and guards and mean teachers. Instead, he was taken to a beautiful building in the country. It was about 100 miles from New York. The guards were called counselors. They were friendly. They showed him how to ride horses. He learned to box, and do other new things. The classes were very small, about eight boys each. And the teachers were nice. They explained things until everyone understood them.

Still he never held up his hand. He never answered when the teacher called on him. Not even with his favorite teacher, Miss Costen. She was kind of an old maid, but the boy liked her. She kept saying he was as smart as anybody. She wouldn't listen when he said he couldn't learn to read.

One day Miss Costen asked the class a question. No hands went up. She called on one boy, then another. No one knew the answer. Finally the teacher said what the answer was.

Suddenly the boy stood up. He looked mad at first, but then tears came to his eyes. He ran out of the room and into the hall. Miss Costen followed. She took him by the shoulders. Then she lifted his chin up, so he had to look her in the eye.

"I knew you knew the answer," she told him. "That's why you're crying. This should prove to you that if you have an idea, speak it out."

The teacher was right. He had wanted to answer more than anything. "I was afraid I'd sound stupid," he said. "And everybody would laugh."

"Always remember this," Miss Costen said, "you're not stupid. You're the same as any other boy your own age. From now on I want you to answer. Nobody's always 100 per cent right, but you'll be right more often than you're wrong."

They went back into the classroom then, and from that time on the boy did answer. As time passed, more and more of his answers were right. Soon he found that he no longer wanted to run and hide. Before long he was at the head of his class. And he went right on climbing. Ten years later the laughing had stopped. People were cheering the youngest man ever to be crowned Heavyweight Champion of the World, Floyd Patterson.

(Source: Jack Newcombe, Floyd Patterson: Heavyweight King, New York: Bartholomew House, Inc., 1961; and Floyd Patterson (with Milton Gross), Victory Over Myself, London: Pelham Books, 1962.)

Questions

I. Reading for Words

especially
parkway
delinquent
reform
counselor

1. Hank stole a car and was sent to __________ school.
2. The ___________ at camp taught Dwight how to swim.
3. A big road with few stoplights is called a ___________.
4. The _________ boy was always in trouble with the police.
5. Jose likes all sports, but he is _________ good at basketball.

II. Reading for Facts

1. Everyone always ____________ when the boy made a mistake.
2. His teacher dressed better than his ___________.
3. On assembly day he had to wear a _________ shirt and a tie.
4. The first time he cut school, he hid in a ___________.
5. Later he found a little room in the ____________.
6. The police picked him up on Staten Island and took him to ______________.
7. The judge sent him to a special ____________.
8. The counselors taught him to ride horses and _________.
9. It was here that a favorite ___________ made a big change in his life.
10. He was the _________ man ever to become Heavyweight Champion.

III. Reading for Ideas

1. Why did the boy dislike school. Was it all the teacher's fault? What could the teacher and the class have done to make school nicer for the boy?
2. Do you blame the boy for cutting school? For staying out all night? For stealing? Why, or why not?

3. Why do you think the school for delinquent boys was so nice to them?
4. What did Miss Costen do for the boy that no other teacher had done?
5. What might have happened to the boy if he hadn't met someone like Miss Costen? Why?

IV. For Good Students

1. Most students have known a teacher like Miss Costen. Have you? Write one page telling what this teacher was like and what she did for you.
2. Do you know anyone who has been in a special school? If so, find out what the school was like and report to the class.
3. If your reading is good, read the first part of Victory Over Myself by Floyd Patterson and tell the class more about his early life.

One-Man Army

Louis Leon was a big, broad-shouldered Puerto Rican. The people in East Harlem called him Pee-Wee. They smiled and waved when he walked down East 100th Street. Everyone knew Pee-Wee. And almost everyone liked him.

In 1956, when Pee-Wee was 20, he became a one-man army. Pee-Wee's army didn't have any guns or officers or rules. His uniform was an old cloth cap and a leather jacket. His battlefield was East Harlem. His enemy was narcotics.

Pee-Wee had grown up in East Harlem. He hated narcotics. Every day he saw addicts on the street, in hallways, and in the backs of stores. Many of these addicts were his friends. There had been 36 boys in his class at school. Thirty-three of them had ended up in jails or hospitals for addicts.

Pee-Wee felt sorry for all the addicts. He wanted to help them. During the summer of 1956, he walked back and forth on East 100th Street. He talked to addicts and learned their problems. Most of them could not hold jobs. They had to spend $20, $30, and even $40 a day for heroin. To get the money, they stole things. Some of them had to sell narcotics to kids that were looking for a thrill.

Pee-Wee learned all he could about narcotics. He discovered that one crime in four was committed by an addict. Every day the addicts in New York spent $¼ million for drugs.

All the addicts Pee-Wee met were sorry they were hooked. But he could do nothing for them. He could listen to their problems and be friendly, but this was not enough. What the addicts really needed was medical help in hospitals. Pee-Wee learned that Roosevelt Hospital had 100 beds for addicts under 21. For older addicts, there were only two hospitals in the country. One was in Lexington, Kentucky. The other was in Texas.

Pee-Wee saw he could do nothing alone. He went to a minister named Norm Eddy. Mr. Eddy had also been working alone. He had tried to help 100 addicts. Only one of these addicts had gone off drugs for good.

Pee-Wee and Mr. Eddy decided to work together. They rented a vacant store on East 103rd Street. They called it the "Narcotics Office." They offered help to addicts and their relatives and friends.

Forty-five people came to the first meeting. In the first year, more than 500 people asked for help. Pee-Wee and Mr. Eddy did all they could. They saw that addicts got food, clothing, and a place to live. They showed addicts how they could get along on less heroin and hold regular jobs. Young addicts were told how to get help in city hospitals. Once a week everyone was invited to a big meeting. Doctors and scientists spoke to the addicts. Ex-addicts told how they had broken the habit.

The Narcotics Office did what it could. But it was not a hospital. It could not cure addicts. Out of 1200 addicts it tried to help, only 25 got off drugs for good. The rest went on having to have their heroin every day. Or else they were men like Tiny Scotts.

Tiny was a big, smiling Negro who had got off drugs in jail. When he got out of prison, he wanted to stay away from drugs. He went to the Narcotics Office for help. He talked to Pee-Wee, and came to meetings. Weeks went by. Then months went by, and still Tiny stayed off drugs. Every three months he got a Commendation Card from the Narcotics Office.

One cold night in March, Tiny came to a meeting at the Narcotics Office. He was to get his fifth Commendation Card. He had been off heroin a year and a half. Everyone at the meeting was proud of Tiny. When his name was called, he moved out of his seat. But he didn't go up to get his Commendation Card. Instead, he started slowly toward the door. "I don't want to accept until I get a few things straightened out," he said. Then he was out the door. The cold March wind blew in on the meeting. Tiny was never seen in the Narcotics Office again.

Tiny had been fighting his own battle. He had lost. Some time later, he wrote a "psalm" and pushed it under Pee-Wee's door:

Heroin is my shepherd
I shall always want
It maketh me to lie down in gutters
It leadeth me beside still madness
It destroyeth my soul . . .

The battle Pee-Wee started is still going on. Today, Pee-Wee is no longer fighting a one-man war. The City and State have joined Pee-Wee in his fight. Adults can now get help at hospitals like Manhattan General. The City now has places like Pee-Wee's old Narcotics Office, where addicts can get help, make friends, read, and play games.

But the army fighting narcotics is still not strong enough. The enemy is still pulling men down in gutters. Nine out of 10 "cures" do not last. More help from the government is needed, and more good citizens like Pee-Wee.

(Source: Bruce Kenrick, Come Out the Wilderness, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962.)

Questions

I. Reading for Words

broad
battlefield
commit
vacant
psalm

1. The apartment was ________ before they moved in.
2. Sammy had strong arms and ________ shoulders.
3. A ________ is a religious poem.
4. Angel didn't ________ the crime.
5. Her uncle died on a ________ in Germany.

II. Reading for Facts

1. Pee-Wee came from East ________.
2. He was a one-man army against ________.
3. What the addicts really needed was care in ________.
4. Pee-Wee and a ________ opened a Narcotics Office.
5. The Narcotics Office helped many people. (True or False)
6. The Narcotics Office cured many people. (True or False)
7. Tiny had got off heroin in ________.
8. One night he was to be given a ________ Card.
9. Tiny Scotts had ________ his battle with heroin.
10. The ________ and ________ have now joined Pee-Wee's fight.

III. Reading for Ideas

1. What kind of person was Pee-Wee? Why could he do more than someone from outside the neighborhood?
2. What had happened to most of the boys in Pee-Wee's class? How would this make him feel?
3. Did most addicts Pee-Wee talked to want to get off drugs? Why couldn't they?
4. Why had Tiny come to the meeting? Why did he leave so suddenly? What was strange about his "psalm"?
5. Do you think addicts should be treated as criminals or as sick people? Why?

IV. For Good Students

1. There have been many TV shows and movies about narcotics. If you have seen one recently, remember all you can about it. Then make notes and tell the class what you think is important.
2. Find what the City and State are doing now to help addicts. Write a page telling what you discovered. If you couldn't find anything, write a page telling what you think the City and State should do.
3. If narcotics lead to the jail or the gutter, why do some young people keep on trying them out? Is it that they don't know what will happen? What might the school or government do to keep them from being so foolish? Tell your ideas to the class.

The Two Mr. Griffin's

Some people are born white. Others are born Negro. There's not much we can do about the color our skin happens to be. We can't order a certain color before we are born. And once we are born we can't change things.

But not long ago one man did change his color. His name was John Griffin. He was a white man from Texas. He wrote articles for magazines. He wanted to write an article about how it feels to be a Negro in the South. There was only one trouble. How could a white man really know how a Negro feels?

Mr. Griffin left Texas for New Orleans, a city in the deep South. On the way, he wondered if there was any way he could become a Negro. When he got to New Orleans, he went to a doctor. He asked if there was any way a white man could change the color of his skin. The doctor said yes. He gave Mr. Griffin some special pills. He told him to take the pills every day and then spend a few hours under a sun lamp.

Mr. Griffin followed the doctor's orders. He hid in a house while he was becoming a Negro. Days went by, and his skin grew darker and darker. He couldn't change his hair, so he cut it all off. Then he shaved his head with a razor.

One night Mr. Griffin looked in the mirror and saw a strange face staring back at him. It was the face of a bald Negro--a total stranger. He hardly knew who he really was. He could almost fool himself, but could he fool other people?

He didn't wait long to find out. Right away he went outside. It was dark. The streets were empty. He walked until he came to a man standing under a street light waiting for a trolley. The man was white. Mr. Griffin held his breath and joined the man. But the white man didn't look at him twice.

When the trolley came, Mr. Griffin got on. He sat down with the Negroes in the back. No one seemed to stare at him or think anything was wrong. He talked to the Negroes and made friends. His experiment had worked:

Mr. Griffin spent six months in the South. He was careful to change nothing but his color. He used his right name. He told people he was a writer traveling in the South. He wore the clothes he would have worn as a white man. He wanted to make sure that any change in the way he was treated was because of the change in his color, nothing else.

During the six months many interesting things happened. He tried to get a job as an educated man, but there were no good jobs for Negroes. White people had them all. He found he had to stay at Negro hotels, eat at Negro restaurants, and use Negro rest rooms. Signs that said "Colored" and "White" told him where he could and couldn't go.

Mr. Griffin walked around in many cities. He often found it hard to get a drink of water when he was thirsty. "White only" restaurants told him to go where he belonged. Sometimes he found it hard to rest when he was tired. The city benches were for white people, and if a Negro sat down anywhere else in the center of town, the police gave him trouble. White people called him "Boy," not "Mister." Sometimes they ordered him around like a servant.

All these things Mr. Griffin had known about before his trip. But he had not known what it feels like to be treated as a half-human being. He had not known the way Southern white people look at Negroes. It was these looks that taught him the most.

He discovered that there are three kinds of looks white people have for Negroes. Most of the time white people didn't really seem to see him. They looked through him. He wasn't important, and people looked at him as if he were a post. Then there was the look that said, "No. No. Don't do that." These came when he sat on a city bench, or did some other thing Negroes were not supposed to do. Worst of all was the "hate stare." These were more frightening than anything he had ever seen. They came only from certain kinds of people. Mr. Griffin felt sorry for people with so much hate in their hearts.

After many adventures, Mr. Griffin decided to become a white man again. He stopped taking the pills and using the sunlamp. Soon his skin was much lighter. He went to New York and told his story on television. Thousands of letters came in, from both white people and Negroes. Almost everyone liked what Mr. Griffin had done. Inside, he had stayed the same person. But his thin skin had made a thick wall of difference.

(Source: John Howard Griffin, Black Like Me, Boston:
Houghton Mifflin, 1961)

Questions

I. Reading for Words

article
experiment
human
sunlamp
educated

1. Dogs are not __________ beings.
2. Not all ________ people have been to college.
3. In science class everyone did an _________.
4. Jerry found an _________ about the police department.
5. Carmen got a nice tan by using a _________ at home.

II. Reading for Facts

1. Mr. Griffin was a _________ man from Texas.
2. He wrote __________ for magazines.
3. The doctor gave Mr. Griffin some __________ to take every day.
4. Mr. Griffin spent hours under a ___________.
5. The only thing he changed was his ___________.
6. Mr. Griffin spent six __________ in the South.
7. Sometimes it was hard to get a ___________.
8. The worst thing was the __________ that some white people gave him.
9. When the trip was over, Mr. Griffin went to _________ ________.
10. He told his story on ___________.

III. Reading for Ideas

1. What reason did Mr. Griffin give for wishing to look like a Negro?
2. Do you think this reason was a good one? Explain.
3. Why did Mr. Griffin want to change as few things as he could?
4. Which did Mr. Griffin dislike most, being thirsty or getting the "hate stare"? What does this tell us about the things that hurt human beings?
5. Do you like what Mr. Griffin did? Why, or why not?

IV. For Good Students

1. Suppose you had seen Mr. Griffin on television. Write a letter to him telling how you feel about what he did.
2. Mr. Griffin became a white man again before he traveled North. If he had stayed a Negro, what would he have discovered about New York City? Explain in a page or less.
3. Suppose you could change your color secretly and go to another school. Write a page telling how things might be different for you.

Big Day in Montgomery

Thursday, December 1, 1955, started just like any other day in the city of Montgomery, Alabama. The light came slowly, birds awoke in the trees, and people started to move about on the quiet streets. By seven-thirty people were everywhere. By eight-thirty the streets were crowded with buses, taxis, and cars, all carrying people to their jobs. Not one of these people could have guessed what was to happen later that day.

Least of all Mrs. Rosa Parks, the woman who was to become a hero by accident. Mrs. Parks was a pleasant, middle-aged woman who worked as a seamstress in a large department store. No one would have picked her to become famous. She just wasn't the type. She was too shy, too busy earning a living, and too much like thousands and thousands of other people.

That Thursday morning Mrs. Parks got up and went to her job as usual. It was a busy day, and when quitting time came she was tired. Her bones ached and her feet hurt as she went outside to wait for the bus that would take her home. Finally a bus marked "Cleveland Avenue" came along, and she got on. She paid her dime and looked for a seat. By good luck she found one.

Mrs. Parks sat back and looked out the window as the bus moved slowly through the center of Montgomery. A few people were standing in the aisle, and she felt thankful for her seat. When the bus stopped in front of the Empire Theater, a lot more people got on. Now the bus was getting crowded.

The bus driver, J.P. Blake, knew just what to do. He ordered Mrs. Parks and three others who had seats to stand up, so the standing passengers could sit down. The other three people obeyed the driver. But not Mrs. Parks. She looked at the man who stood waiting to take her seat. She thought how tired she was. She refused to move.

Again, the driver knew just what to do. He called a policeman and had Mrs. Parks arrested. She was taken to a police station and charged with a crime.

What crime? How could it be a crime for a woman not to give her seat to a man? It was a crime because Mrs. Parks was a Negro, and the man was white. A law said that bus drivers had the power to make Negro passengers give up their seats if white people were standing. Some seats in the front of each bus were for "whites only." Negroes had to stand even when these seats were empty.

When Mrs. Parks was arrested, the news spread fast. The Negroes of Montgomery had finally had enough. For years they had been treated badly by the white bus drivers. They had been called names--"black apes" and worse things. Some drivers made Negroes pay at the front of the bus, then get off and walk to the rear door. But as the Negroes made their way to the rear, the doors would slam shut and the buses would move off. The Negroes would be left standing on the ground.

Leading Negroes of Montgomery called a meeting. They were angry. But what could they do? Negroes had always been treated badly on the buses, even though there were three Negro bus riders to every one white passenger. And worst of all, the laws were against the Negroes.

There was no law, however, that said Negroes had to be on the buses in the first place. This gave the Negro leaders an idea. What would happen if all Negroes stayed off the buses? Since most passengers were Negroes, the bus company would certainly lose money. Before long some of the drivers would probably lose their jobs. How would the rude drivers like that? And how would the white passengers like a city without buses?

Such a thing had never been tried before. Would it work? There was only one way to find out. On Saturday, two days after Mrs. Parks was arrested, 7,000 leaflets were printed:

> Don't ride the bus to work, to town, to school or any place Monday, December 5.
>
> A Negro woman has been arrested and put in jail because she refused to give up her bus seat.
>
> Don't ride the buses to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday. If you work, take a cab, or share a ride, or walk.

All weekend these leaflets were passed from hand to hand among Negro bus riders. When Monday came, the buses were almost empty. The plan had worked! Thousands of Negroes walked to their jobs and schools. As the empty buses passed, they stood on the sidewalks and cheered. Other thousands rode in Negro taxis. Still other thousands shared private cars. That day the bus company lost a mighty big pile of dimes--more than $3,000.00.

The news flashed all over the world. Montgomery, Alabama, soon was known as "The Walking City." Money and letters of support came from all over the North, and from as far away as Japan.

At first the white people who ran Montgomery thought the whole thing would be over in a few days. The Negroes would get tired of walking, they said, and would slowly come back to the buses. "The laws will never be changed," they announced. "We'll run the buses in Montgomery just the way we want to run them."

This kind of talk didn't scare the Negroes. They kept on walking. In January, the home of Dr. Martin Luther King, the Negro leader, was bombed. But the Negroes still weren't to be scared. In February, 93 Negroes were arrested. Thousands of others kept on walking.

The months went by, the buses stayed empty. Meanwhile, the Negro leaders had taken their case to the courts. Finally, on December 20, 1956, more than a year after Mrs. Parks had been arrested, the good news came. The Supreme Court of the United States ordered Montgomery to desegregate its buses. Mrs. Parks and thousands like her were now to sit in the seats they wanted for as long as they wanted. All Americans were to be treated alike.

Mrs. Parks' story was over, but the desegregation story had just started. What happened in Montgomery taught the Negroes the power they really had. It taught them they could stick up for their rights if they stuck together. Desegregation started to come in schools, in trains, in bus stations, in theaters, in jobs. It is still going on, and the names of new heroes are still to be heard. But for starting the job we should thank Mrs. Parks, a wonderful woman whose feet were tired one day, but whose heart was always brave.

(Source: Martin Luther King, Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958.)

Questions

I. Reading for Words

seamstress
aisle
leaflets
support
desegregate

1. Everyone should ________ the Junior Red Cross.
2. A ________ works at a sewing machine.
3. The city had to ________ its high school.
4. Frank walked back down the ________ to his assembly seat.
5. The teacher passed out ___________ about Parents' Week.

II. Reading for Facts

1. Mrs. Parks had a job as a ____________.
2. When work was over, she got on a _______ to go home.
3. The ____________ told her to stand up.
4. Mrs. Parks was ___________ when she refused.
5. On Saturday, thousands of ___________ were printed.
6. On Monday, the buses were almost __________.
7. The Negroes stayed off the buses for over a __________.
8. ________ ___________ __________ was the name of the Negro leader.
9. The _________ ____________ ordered Montgomery to desegregate its buses.
10. This story started _________ years ago.

III. Reading for Ideas

1. Why would no one have picked Mrs. Parks to become a hero? What did she do that made her famous?
2. The white people of Montgomery had the power of the laws behind them. What power did the Negroes have--and use?
3. We are always told to obey the law. Do you blame Mrs. Parks for not doing so? Explain.
4. The drivers of the Montgomery buses were all white. What do you think were the reasons for this?
5. What did the Negroes of America learn from the Montgomery story?

IV. For Good Students

1. What are the names of other Negro heroes that have been in the news recently? Look in the magazines and newspapers for their stories and to tell the class.
2. Most of us have known some ordinary people who stuck up for their rights. Tell about one of these people in a page or less.
3. Dr. Martin Luther King has written an excellent book, Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story. A good reader will enjoy reporting on it to the class.

A Life to Remember

Sam Battle is an old man now. He lives with his wife in an apartment on West 138th Street, in the heart of Harlem. At 80, there isn't much he can still do. But he's got quite a life to remember.

Best of all, he remembers a day back in 1911, more than fifty years ago. This was the day he first put on the blue uniform of a New York City policeman. He was a big man in those days--6 feet 3 inches tall, and enough muscle to tip the scales at 280. He was smart, too. In his spare time he read Shakespeare and other great writers. But getting on the police force was not easy.

"They turned me down three times for a bad heart," Sam recalls. "But the people who turned me down are all dead and gone now, and my heart still seems to be in good shape. It wasn't my heart that worried them. It was the color of my skin."

Before Sam Battle, all New York policemen were white. A Negro cop was a strange sight to many people. "Here comes the nigger cop! Here comes the nigger cop!" the kids screamed. Fortunately, Sam was patient. "They didn't know better," he says today. But the white officers, who should have known better, were as bad as the children. "They didn't talk to me," Sam remembers. "But I paid them no mind and went around my business. I came from a good Southern family, and was always told to hold my head high."

Soon Sam was to show the white officers how wrong they were. One day a Harlem Negro was killed by a white policeman in a riot. The angry crowd started to kill the policeman. A Negro cop was needed, and Sam Battle was the man. He ran into the crowd and saved the white policeman's life.

As a reward, Battle was allowed to take the study course for police sergeant. Later, he became the first Negro lieutenant. By then, of course, there were lots of Negro policemen on the streets of New York. Big Sam Battle had led the way.

Sam's father had been born a slave. No wonder Sam remembers the old days well. "In my day," he recalls, "all you could be was a porter. We had three doctors maybe. Today, it's opened up. Our young people haven't been through what we had to go through, and so they're unhappy. They're not patient. And they're right. We haven't gone fast enough for them."

Sam Battle made a name for himself breaking up riots in Harlem. "But there would never have been riots if the Negro had been treated right," he believes. "Not just for the Negro's sake, but for the sake of my country as a whole, I look forward to the day when all of us will treat other people the way we'd like to be treated ourselves."

(Source: New York Post, March 28, 1963)

Questions

I. Reading for Words

uniform
Shakespeare
fortunately
patient
lieutenant

1. __________ the sun came out before the picnic.
2. Mary is ________ with her little sister.
3. Carlos looked handsome in his Army _______.
4. The police sergeant asked his ____________ what to do.
5. _____________ wrote many famous plays.

II. Reading for Facts

1. Sam Battle is over __________ years old.
2. His father had once been a __________.
3. Sam and his wife live in the middle of ____________.
4. Over 50 years ago, Sam became the first ______________ policeman.
5. At first the police doctors said he had a bad ________.
6. It was really his __________ that worried them.
7. Soon Sam saved the life of a white ____________.
8. He was allowed to study to become a police ___________.
9. Later on, he became the first Negro police ___________.
10. Sam thinks Negroes haven't been ____________ enough getting their rights.

III. Reading for Ideas

1. Why was a smart and strong man like Sam Battle turned down three times by the police force? What was the real reason?
2. What trouble did Sam have at first? How did he feel about it?
3. What did Sam have to do before the white officers would respect him?
4. Sam Battle says that young Negroes are not so patient as old men like himself. What reason does he give for this difference?

5. At the end of the article, Sam says that Negroes should be given their rights for the sake of the whole country. What might white people gain by treating Negroes fairly?

IV. For Good Students

1. Sam Battle was the first Negro policeman in New York City. Do you know any other "Negro firsts?" See how many you can find before the class meets again.
2. There are still jobs and offices in America which Negroes have never filled. What "firsts" are still to come? Make another list.
3. If it is hard to make lists like this, it is because we don't know enough. There are many books that can help us. Word Pictures of the Great by Elise Derricotte is easy to read. The First Book of Negroes by Langston Hughes and Negro Makers of America by Carter Woodson is not too hard for most of us.

2. Materials created to adapt prescribed content to the immediate verbal experiences needed by the child.

In the practical classroom situation, the teacher of English or reading must from time to time stress a school- or system-wide theme. United Nations Week, Brotherhood Week, etc., all make their proper demands upon curriculum content. These demands, however, often conflict with imperatives inherent in the learning processes of the slow, deprived child. Constant practice in a progressive and interrelated series of verbal skills is needed for optimal development of the child's potential. The omission of such practice for a week often results in far greater than a week's loss. Hence the teacher is forced to create or adapt materials which integrate the needed skills with the required content.

The following materials were prepared by a teacher to meet these demands. The first exercise is self-explanatory; it combines practice in identifying the main ideas of paragraphs, on a relatively advanced level, with concepts and factual material concerning the United Nations. The second exercise, for use during Brotherhood Week, stresses the appreciational skill of reading for elementary ideas and inferences. Preparatory activities would probably include a discussion of the age of the story, enough geographical discussion to establish the location and simple characteristics of the Near East, and identification of the word Moslem. It is intended that the last page of the story be withheld until after a discussion of possible endings and implications.

FINDING THE MAIN IDEA

Circle the main idea in each group of words:

ears
head
nose
eyes

heart
foot
girl
head

girl
woman
boy
family

family
people
friends
cousins

stores
schools
city
people

United States
farms
mountains
cities

Mexico
Russia
United States
United Nations

Underline the sentence in each paragraph that contains the main idea:

1. The United Nations tries to keep peace in the world. It gives the countries of the world a chance to talk over their quarrels and settle them. It sends soldiers to stop small wars before they grow into big wars. It tries to see that all people have enough to eat and a house to live in.

2. New York City is a good home for the United Nations. It is one of the largest cities in the world. Airplanes come here every day from many countries. In New York are groups of people speaking many different languages. People from the United Nations can find many interesting things to do when they are not working.

3. The World Health Organization tries to control diseases that once killed millions of people every year. Teachers and scientists are sent all over the world by the United Nations. Farmers are shown how to raise better crops and healthier animals. Yes, the United Nations does many things. It even tries to save the wild animals of Africa.

4. In school we should learn all we can about the United Nations. In our homes, some of us are asked to give money to UNICEF, the part of the United Nations that helps children. We can read what the United Nations is doing every day in the newspapers. When we grow up, we can vote for men who want to make the United Nations strong. In all these ways, we can help the United Nations keep peace in the world.

The Three Rings

adapted from a tale by Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375)

In the Near East, Christians, Jews, and Moslems have lived together for hundreds of years. Most of these years have been peaceful ones. The people have found that brotherhood is better than fighting. They have had many leaders who believed in peace and friendship.

The great Saladin was one of these leaders. He was a Moslem. He ruled about the year 1200. Many stories are told about this wise and good king. One of these stories tells how he learned the lesson of brotherhood.

It happened once that Saladin's kingdom was attacked by powerful enemies. The war soon took all of Saladin's money. He wanted to borrow money until the time of the year when taxes would be collected. But there was only one man in the kingdom with enough money to make a large loan. This was Meldek, a wealthy Jew.

Saladin knew that Meldek had more than enough gold coins. He also knew that Meldek would not want to lend money to a Moslem king. Meldek would be afraid that the gold might be used to drive Christians and Jews out of the kingdom. So Saladin had to think of a way to make Meldek lend him the money.

Soon Saladin had thought of a plan. He would get Meldek in an argument about religion. In the middle of the argument, Saladin would pretend to get mad. Then he would have an excuse to make Meldek give him the loan.

A few days later, Meldek arrived at the palace and bowed low before the royal throne. At first Saladin pretended to praise him. "Honest and wise man," the king said, "I have heard that you have studied the three religions of my kingdom for many years. Now, I want you to tell me which of the three religions is the true one. Is it the Moslem? Is it the Christian? Or is it the Jewish?

Meldek really was honest and wise. But he was also smart and quick. He saw right away that Saladin had set a trap for him. If he said the Moslem religion was the true one, he would be denying his own faith. And if he answered that the Jewish religion was best, he would be insulting the powerful king.

"Your highness," Meldek said after a minute, "I will answer your question. But I will have to answer it by telling you a story:

> There once lived a man who was very, very rich. He owned great lands, much money, and many jewels. His prize possession was a ring of solid gold.
>
> One day, when this rich man was old, he called his family together. He told them that he would give the ring secretly to one of his sons. When the rich man died, the son who had the ring was to become head of the family. He was to get everything that the father had owned.
>
> A short time later, the rich man gave the ring in secret to his favorite son. And when the father died, the son became owner of all his riches and lands. Then the son decided to do the same thing that his father had done. He gave the ring in secret to one of his own sons.
>
> In this way, the ring was handed down from father to son, from father to son, for many years. At last it passed into the hands of a man who had three sons, all of whom he loved dearly. He did not want to give everything to one son and nothing to the others. So he had his jeweler make two more gold rings, just like the first

> in every way. When he died, his sons were very surprised to find that each of them had been given a ring in secret. And each ring looked exactly like the other two. What were they to do?
>
> The three sons argued for weeks over which ring was the real one. Then they decided that there was only one thing to do. They would have to share their father's lands, owning them equally in peace and friendship.

This was the end of Meldek's story. Right away Saladin saw the point. Of the three religions that The Father had given to men, each man thought his own was the true one. Yet God's great and wonderful earth could still be shared in peace and friendship.

Meldek saw that Saladin understood the point of the story. Now he was glad to lend him the money. In the years that followed, the two men became good friends. Each kept his own religion, and each did what he could for the good of the kingdom.

3. Materials created to facilitate the teaching of composition skills by personalizing instruction.

Composition is perhaps the language-learning area best served by teacher-prepared materials. The purpose of composition instruction is, after all, not the avoiding of errors in dreary workbooks but the development of competencies necessary for interpersonal communication. It is this personal aspect of composition that justifies the use of non-commercial materials.

The need for such materials is inversely proportional to the cultural level of the student's background. The deprivation, rejection, and confusion experienced by the lower-class child invariably produce a complex of highly charged emotions, the expression of which is hindered by the very forces that engendered them. Given the proper stimulation, however, the so-called slow slum child can write with insights and sensitivities far above his "mental age." A mental-health approach to composition instruction for this type of child not only results in more writing, but allows the child to be considered a unique person.

In some classrooms, this is an unusual demand. But it is a demand that few students will fail to meet. Especially if the child knows that his efforts will get an understanding reading, will he pour his experiences, desires, and dreams out on paper. If communication of his feelings and ideas is made the aim, he will want to write in such a way that ready communication is possible. This means good English. The possibility that the student's work might be reproduced for class or school-wide distribution is an additional incentive for him to express himself in the best possible form. "Can someone else read what you've written to the class?" will motivate more proofreading than exhortations which regard the punctilios of the written language as ends in themselves.

Reproduction of student writing by the teacher has many results--often unexpected. It recognizes the writer's significance as a human being. It serves as a reward for the outstanding achievements of relatively more able pupils. It provides tangible reinforcement for the diffident or slow student. It motivates future efforts for all. It provides reading material unsurpassed in interest. The teacher who reproduces the writings of disadvantaged children will frequently be asked for more and more copies. Parents are particularly impressed. "My father, he framed all those you give me," one student told this writer.

Composition has two aspects: adequacy or quality of expression, and correctness of expression. It is important that the verbally handicapped lower class child learn to separate these two functions, in both thought and practice. He is often terrified of the pen because it makes mistakes. He must learn that first the pen writes, then it corrects the inevitable errors.

The samples of student writing which follow illustrate this two-step process. The first is a proofreading exercise prepared by a teacher merely by adding numbers indicating mistakes to a character sketch that an exuberant student was rash enough to hand in just as written. It is obviously transcribed speech; but it should be noted that this gives it its vitablity, as well as its careless form. The same light tone could not have been maintained if the fear of making mistakes had forced the writer to inch her way along each line. Not just any student composition should be used for this purpose, of course. In this case, the writer was possessed of an invincible ego, both writer and subject were in the same class, and the composition contained humorous mistakes, as well as errors common enough to warrant class discussion. The numbers facilitate discussion, make errors easier for the less able student to find, and permit use of part of the exercise as a homework assignment.

The second and third items are compositions written--and proofread (!)--by ninth-grade girls. The idea behind the brotherhood essay is the student's own. Coming from a member of a minority group, it makes a moving statement. The verbal facility apparent in the piece is the result of a good deal of previous writing--motivated, of course, by just the procedures we are here considering. The other essay is by an overage girl, the product of two broken homes and a long string of schools. Although of near-normal intelligence, she had twice been made to repeat grades and had a sullen and unstable personality structure. Reproduction of this essay made a noticeable difference in the girl's entire orientation towards English, the group, and the teacher. Tears came to her eyes when she read it to the class. She had "gone over" as a unique and valuable person.

It should be noted that neither of these essays has been corrected to the point of revision by a teacher. Except for the correction of a few minor errors, they appear exactly as written. Yet both students were over a year retarded in reading and had recorded I.Q.'s in the lower-normal range.

The last sample illustrates what can be done by using the contributions of individual students in a composite class poem. In an attempt to have pupils incorporate sensory experiences into their writing, the teacher asked a seventh year class to "really think" about what sights, tastes, feelings, etc., meant the most to them. Individual lists were made and then read to the group. When the class chorused "Oh, yes!" to an item, it was written on the board. The result: our poem. The finished product proved to have a somewhat sublime appeal to its authors, yet everything in it is obviously well known and meaningful to the lower-class child.

"My Best Friend Lulu"

My short story is about my best friend[1]. [2] Which you know by now because of my title. Lulu is a very unusal[3] girl. She is short[4][5] [6] Blonde[7] (She's really a [8] Bleached Blond) [9] [10] [11,12,13] Brown eyes and[14] sort of on the [15] Chubby side. When I say [16] unusal it's because of the way she acts. Oh [17] one thing [18] her [19,20] snikers she never takes them off. She just loves her [21] snikers. [22] Don't get me wrong [23] I don't dislike [24] snikers but when you even [25] were them to bed [26,27] Well.

She does the most [28] craziest things [29,30] for example [31] she [32] trows herself [33] to my dog instead of [34] being the other way around. If you'd see her you'd think she was a dog [35] to. One nice thing about her [36] if you are sick she'll come [37] visite you and give you an encouraging word (if [33] thats what you call it) [39] She'll say [40] [41] don't worry about your appendice [42] its [43] in the best hands. That old [44,45] Doc. will take it out and you'll be fine in a week. [46] Then she'll add [47] But if I were you I'd get a young [48,49] doctor after all [50] he is [51] 71 and [52] Uses glasses [53,54] he might take out [55] you [56] stomache by mistake. Yes [57] get a young doctor. On second [58] though that might not be a good idea either [59,60] they are so [61] young fresh from [62] Collage [63] and not [64] experence [65] not like the old doctor. Boy [66] would you be in [67] troble. Yes [68] my suggestion is to stay with your [69] appendict and forget about those doctors [70] [71] they only mean [72] troble. Oh well [73] you only live once. You would like to live a little longer [74] wouldn't you. [75] Well [76] good-by [77] [78] hope you [79] fell better. I'll come see you tomorrow if [80] your alive.

81,82 83,84 85

See what I mean she'll make you all mixtup instead of being helpful. You'll just go crazy thinking what to do and while . . .

Brotherhood and the World I Live In

by Emma Ramos, Class 9-5, J.H.S. 60X

Have you every stopped to think about the world you live in? Did you ever really stop and think about how big and wonderful it really is? I think you have, some time or other. But maybe the world you live in isn't exactly the same as the world I live in. So let me tell you about it.

Most important, there are the people. They come in all races, all religions, and all nationalities. They are all different in their own ways. Some people are tall, some are short, and some are in between. But that's not the only way they are different. There are fat people and there are skinny people. Some people are good in math, some in social studies, some in English, and some in other subjects. Some people like to cook, some like to sew, some like to iron, and some don't like to do anything. You see, every person and every thing is different in one way or another. We don't all think alike, and we don't all like the same things. The world is very big, and there are all kinds of people in it.

Sometimes these differences among people cause trouble. For this reason, we practice brotherhood, and even have a special Brotherhood Week in February. Once in a while some people wish we weren't quite so different, so there wouldn't be any need to have Brotherhood Week. But if we think about it, we should really be thankful for the need for brotherhood.

Can you see yourself in a world where everyone looked alike? Can you imagine yourself in a world where everyone was the same? In such a world you wouldn't learn anything new, you wouldn't be able to help others, and others wouldn't be able to help you. You wouldn't know who was who, and it wouldn't really matter. You couldn't have a best friend to tell your joys and sorrows to, for you would all have the same joys and sorrows. It would be just the opposite of our wonderful world, where people who don't even speak the same language can still enjoy each other's company. True, we wouldn't have to practice brotherhood in a world where everyone was the same. But do you think you could be happy in such a world? I don't. And that's why I'm thankful for "Brotherhood and the World I Live In."

My Mother Ruth

by Angela Ortega, Class 9-5, J.H.S. 60X

My mother happens to be a very wonderful one. Many girls may think of their mothers as being the best in the whole world. Many may think a mother is wonderful because she cooks for them, washes their clothes, and talks over their problems with them. I would never have thought of boring my mother with my problems.

Her name is Ruth. The name Ruth has always seemed a very sad one to me. And that's just how she is--sad.

She is a very attractive woman, and young to have a daughter my age. When she was young she suffered a great deal. She lost her mother at the age of thirteen. Then she had to move in with an aunt. She was treated very cruelly.

She then married at the age of fifteen. She still wasn't treated in the best of taste, so, shall we say, she had to move on. Moving on with a baby was quite a thing for a young girl. She could have given me up, but she held out as long as she could. Receiving help from nowhere, she starved to keep me well and healthy.

Finally the day came when it was just too much for her. She became very ill and was taken to the hospital. She remained in the hospital for a year and a half.

As you probably can guess, I was taken away from her. When she felt that she had a little energy, she came to visit me. She received passes from the hospital and came to see me. I was very young at the time, but I'll always remember my mother coming to see me on Sundays. She had to come a very long way, but she always came. Sometimes she didn't look so happy. I used to get the feeling that she didn't like me. But at that time I didn't understand that she was sick.

When she was released from the hospital, she came to get me the same week. She wasted no time in having me by her side. Most young girls nowadays who have babies probably wouldn't care if they had their babies with them or not.

I lived with my mother until I was fourteen years of age. Then she became ill again, and once more we had to part. I was sent from Chicago to New York. But she writes every week, and on my birthday she calls me from Chicago.

I never told my mother how glad I was that she kept me and didn't put me into an orphanage. But to myself I treasure her for that.

Ten Things We Have Loved

Pistachio nuts when you're at the movies.
The sound of squish after snow falls.
Someone scratching an itch you can't reach.
Chocolate milk when you're tired of plain.
The sight of a baby smiling.
Fresh-cut watermelon, the first of the year.
The feel of clean pajamas.
Mr. Softee coming down the street.
A cat purring under your hand.
The safe feeling when you're in church,
like a flower in a vase.

4. Materials created to give pupils varied practice in specific reading skills.

The teacher who wishes to teach specific reading skills to [illegible] limited children may on occasion be unable to find adequate commercial materials. Conventional skills workbooks and texts are intended, of course, for the general student population. They often lack practice exercises in skills needed by particular individuals or groups among the urban slum population. If these needed exercises are offered, they may incorporate too heavy a vocabulary load or proceed too rapidly to a relatively complex level. Even if the material is adequate in quality, it may be inadequate in quantity. The verbally impoverished child often needs more practice in a skill than is offered in commercial materials. Also, conventional skills texts and workbooks frequently demand that the learner practice a specific skill upon essentially meaningless material. The skill is made the aim of the lesson; the content is irrelevant. The assumption is made that the student values, or can be made to value, attainment of the skill enough to learn it for the sake of a distant and generalized goal. For the slum child, however, the motivation offered by the skills qua skills approach is often too extrinsic.

The exercise that follows is intended to meet many of these objections. The skill stressed is one needed by many verbally limited junior high school students, and at the same time, inadequately covered in most available material: the ability to grasp the significance of quotation marks while reading fiction. Many children, in their struggle with vocabulary, syntactical patterns, and story line, have developed the habit of "reading through" quotation marks. It is hard for the teacher to find material specifically prepared to correct this deficiency, particularly material enabling the child to do something. Much available material is orientated toward composition, is too complex, or requires endless copying of meaningless sentences. This exercise offers active and progressive development of the skill within a contentual framework significant to the child. The directions included in the exercise can be altered to suit the needs of a particular group, or augmented to include oral interpretation, etc. The story itself is an old folk tale rewritten for this purpose.

Directions: First read this page. Then underline all words spoken by people in the story. The first group of words is underlined for you.

The Three Wishes
(adapted from an old French folk tale)

A middle-aged man once lived with his middle-aged wife in a house that was right in the middle of a middle-sized country. The name of the man was John Everyman. His wife's name was Mary. And the name of the country was Everywhere.

There was nothing odd or strange about John and Mary Everyman. They were neither short nor tall, neither fat nor thin, neither rich nor poor. They lived in a house that looked like millions of others the world around. No one has ever known why the Stranger picked their house at which to stop. But the fact remains that he did.

The evening the stranger came started out just like any other evening. John walked home from his day's work in the fields. He found Mary peeling potatoes at the sink. He walked to the stove and lifted the lid off a pot. Then he made a terrible face. "Soup!" he said. "That's all we ever eat in this house. Soup and potatoes one day, and potatoes and soup the next."

"With the money you bring home," Mary said, "what else can we eat? Is it my fault that you have to eat soup and potatoes?"

"We have enough money," John said. "The trouble is, you spend it all on clothes."

"Ha!" Mary said. "Ha! Ha! Ha!" She stepped back from the stove and stood with her hands on her hips. "Look at this old dress I have on, will you? Do you like the neighbors to see me walking around in these rags?"

But John was too tired for angry words. Besides, he and Mary had said them all before, over and over again. They spoke their lines like actors in a play. Now John walked to the window and looked out. It was beginning to get dark. An evening breeze was blowing thousands of brown leaves along the ground. The sky had a cold, gray look. John knew that soon the first snow would be falling.

Directions: On this page, underline all words spoken by Mary with one line. Put two lines under the words spoken by John.

John sat down at the table. "I know supper will be soup and potatoes," he said sadly. "But I still wish we could eat something else, like salad and steak."

"That would be fun," Mary said. "But we can't live on wishes."

"And we can't live without them," John said. "Oh, how I'd like a nice thick steak, oceans and oceans of gravy, and a big green salad."

"And a maid to serve it all," Mary said.

"And piles of fresh fruit," John said.

"And a big house," Mary added.

"And the finest wine."

"And lots of new clothes!"

"And a big plum pudding," John burst out--for this was his favorite wish.

Suddenly there came a knock at the door. John and Mary stopped speaking. They listened. But they heard only the sound of the wind in the chimney, and the soup boiling on the stove. Then the knock came again.

"It must be one of the neighbors," Mary whispered. Her eyes quickly looked around the room. "Oh, the house is a mess!"

John went to the door. He opened it, and at the same moment his mouth opened in surprise. He took a step backward and looked at Mary. Her mouth was open too. Then he looked back at the odd-looking man who stood outside.

The Stranger was tall, and so thin that there seemed to be nothing between his skin and his bones. His heavy black suit looked a hundred years old. An old red coat flew from his shoulders like a tattered flag. His head was round, and flat on top, with skin that looked like ancient leather. In one hand he carried an old, dry branch.

Directions: On this page and the next, quotation marks have been left out. First underline all words that are spoken by people in the story. Then put quotation marks where they belong.

Greetings, John and Mary, the Stranger said in a high, cracked voice. He looked past them into the room. Ah, I see you are about to eat. If I had known, I would not have called at this hour.

John was again surprised--the stranger knew their names! But he said nothing. He was unable to open his mouth.

Well, the Stranger went on, as long as I'm here, may I come in? Then without waiting for an answer, he walked into the house. John and Mary watched him smell the soup, smile, and sit down in John's chair at the table. He put the branch down in front of him.

Mary was the first to speak. Will you stay to supper? she asked. It sounded silly, but it was the only thing she could think of to say.

The Stranger held up a thin hand. No, he said. My visit will be a short one. He sat back in the chair and put the tips of his fingers together.

Do you come from around here? John asked. I wondered, because you seem to know our names.

Yes, I know your names, replied the Stranger, with a far-away look in his eye. I know your names--and much, much more.

Now his little eyes grew narrow and bright. I know you better than you know yourselves, John and Mary Everyman. I have often heard you wishing for the things you think will make you happy. That is why I have come. I shall leave with you this branch, a branch of the Tree of Good Wishes.

The Stranger held the small branch out toward John and Mary. Mary stepped forward and took it. She felt very foolish, yet she wanted to know more. The Tree of Good Wishes? she repeated.

It's just a small branch, the Stranger said quickly. But it's big enough for four wishes. He stood up. Remember, make sure that you hold it . . .

John started to laugh before the Stranger had finished speaking. At first he had felt a little afraid of the Stranger. Then he had wanted to learn more about him. Now he was sure he had learned the truth. The Stranger was a little crazy. The branch, after all, could have come from one of John's own trees in the yard. The old man could be making his living walking from house to house, selling his branches to anyone foolish enough to buy them.

Be careful, John Everyman, the Stranger warned. I am not to be laughed at.

But this only made John laugh louder. If you don't like it, he told the Stranger, you can take your branch and leave the house right now.

The Stranger smiled. As you wish, he said, getting up from the chair. But I will not take the branch with me. John and Mary, you have wished for so many things, for so long, that this branch should be yours. But you should not have laughed, John Everyman. Because you laughed, I will leave you only three wishes, not the four I promised.

The Stranger held the branch out in front of him. He pointed it at John. Fire seemed to shoot from his little eyes. Slowly and evenly, he started to speak: I WISH THAT I MIGHT BE GONE FROM THIS HOUSE.

And the Stranger was gone!

John and Mary watched the branch fall from the vanished hand to the floor. It works! Mary shouted. She threw her arms around John. Together they danced around the table.

Think what the neighbors will say now! Mary cried. Then she said, But we must plan our wishes carefully. Tonight we will decide what to wish for, and tomorrow we will do the wishing.

Directions: On this and the following pages, put quotation marks where they should be.

John thought this was a good idea. It would be foolish to make three fast wishes, then find they had forgotten something important. He picked up the branch from the floor. Then he sat down at the table and looked at the branch with loving eyes. While Mary put supper on the table, they talked of the wonderful things that would soon be theirs--a great house, servants, and money enough to last a lifetime.

It seems hard to believe, John said. Tomorrow we will be the happiest people on earth. But tonight, here we are, about to eat soup and potatoes again. You know, I *still* wish a big plum pudding were on the table.

And a big plum pudding *was* on the table!

Mary was busy at the stove. But she turned around as soon as the smell of plum pudding reached her nose. Her face grew red. Her eyes grew large--nearly as large as the dish that held the plum pudding. You fool! she cried. Give me that branch. You've wasted a wish on a silly plum pudding!

John let Mary have the branch. She had spoken the truth. They had had three wishes, and he had just thrown one of them away. He buried his face in his hands. I'm sorry, he said. The other two wishes will be yours. I promise. Oh, I'm sorry, sorry . . .

Sorry! Mary cut in. What good does that do? She was so angry, the tips of her ears glowed red. You wasted a wish! she cried. You're a fool, do you hear! A fool! I wish that big plum pudding were stuck to the end of your nose!

And the plum pudding was stuck to the end of John's nose.

John leaped up from the table. Now it was his turn to be angry. He jumped around the room like a wild man, pulling at the plum pudding with both hands.

Hold still! Mary cried. I'll help pull it off.

It won't come off! John shouted. Get a knife. Cut it off.

Quick as a whistle Mary had a knife in her hand. She touched the plum pudding with the sharp edge.

Ouch! John yelled. It's not plum pudding any more. It's part of me.

Alas, it was true. Blood started to drip from the plum pudding where Mary had scratched it with the knife. John fell to his knees. Please, he asked her, use the last wish to get this thing off my nose.

But this Mary would not do. Which would you rather have, she asked him, a pile of diamonds in the back yard, or that pudding taken off your nose?

The pudding taken off my nose, John replied sadly. He had to hold the pudding out from his mouth to speak.

Isn't there anything you would rather have? Mary asked him.

John thought for a moment. No, he decided, there was nothing. A whole mountain of diamonds wouldn't make up for a plum pudding on one's nose.

What do we really need that we don't have now? he asked

Mary. We've always had enough, haven't we? Enough food? Enough money? Enough clothes? Enough is all we really need, isn't it?

But Mary didn't answer. She was listening to voices on the road outside. The voices were coming closer. Who could it be? The neighbors?

Of course! The neighbors were coming! What could Mary do? Could she let them see her husband with a plum pudding on the end of his nose? Never!

Mary flew across the room. She picked up the branch. At the same time the last wish tumbled out of her mouth: I wish the plum pudding were off the end of John's nose!

And the pudding was off the end of John's nose!

John smiled from ear to ear. He stood rubbing the end of his nose. He stared cross-eyed at the spot where the plum pudding had been, then he looked up at Mary.

But Mary was looking at the door. Both of them listened to the sound of the voices growing louder outside. Before long there would be a knock on the door.

John and Mary stood waiting, but no knock came. The voices went right past the house. Soon they could no longer be heard. Mary took a deep breath and closed her eyes.

Look! John cried. The branch! It's growing a leaf!

Mary looked down at the branch she still held in her hand. Sure enough! A small, light green leaf was now unfolding before their very eyes. As they watched, the leaf became darker in color. Then it started to turn yellow. In a few minutes it was bright red.

John took the branch from Mary and looked at the leaf closely. He could see that not all of the leaf had turned red. Small marks that looked like scratches were still green. No, they were not scratches! They were letters! There was something written on the leaf!

John started reading aloud: John and Mary, there will always be things you don't have. You shouldn't think too much about these things. If you do, you will always be unhappy.

John and Mary were silent a minute. Then Mary said, Let me see. She took the branch from John. But the green letters were already turning yellow. Soon it was just another brown leaf, like thousands of others on the ground outside.

The tree has brought us a good wish, after all, John said. It is a wish that we can make come true--a wish to be happy with the things we have.

Mary rubbed her fingers over the crisp, brown leaf. Then she looked slowly around the room. It was as though she were seeing her house for the first time. She saw the room as it really was, not as it might have been. It was a comfortable room, she realized. A very pleasant room, in fact. She smiled as she turned back to the stove and sink she knew so well.

It's true, Mary told John. It's the things we have that bring happiness, not the things we don't have.

And then, for the first time in their lives, John and Mary Everyman gave thanks as they sat down to a meal of soup and potatoes.

5. Materials created to provide the student with the stimulation offered by a wide variety of literary forms.

There is no good reason why the verbal diet of the deprived child need consist solely of narrative and expository prose. Plays, essays, and poems can provide zestful variety. Yet such material is often hard to find or not available for classroom use.

It is a common experience for teachers to adapt plays to the level of a particular group, particularly when a stage performance is in the offing. A good play, properly taught, offers the child learning opportunities not necessitated by much of his other reading, such as an awareness of the inner workings of plot development and the correct phrasing of English sentences. It is less usual, for obvious reasons, for teachers to adapt or create essays and poetry. As a result, the child's experience with extended narrative poems, for instance, is limited to "A Visit From St. Nicholas." The vocabulary load, sentence inversions, and underlying concepts in most schoolroom classics are too burdensome for many culturally different children to handle.

The following narrative poem has been created from a conventional yarn especially for the verbally handicapped child. The story is exciting, the conventional ballad meter is absolutely regular, and the vocabulary is simple. The child should be taught that for thousands of years people used poetry, not prose, to tell their stories. It is hoped that skillful teaching of this poem will enable the inexperienced reader to understand why.

The Ballad of Robin Hood

Of bold Robin Hood and his brave Merry Men   bold--brave, daring
You've perhaps heard folks tell of before;
How he lived in the forest and ate the King's deer,
In that merry old England of yore;   yore--long ago

How he shot at the Sheriff and hid from the King,
When His Majesty's army drew near;
How he stole from the rich, and then gave to the poor,
This bold outlaw of Nottinghamshire.

Now, the story we'll tell starts in Nottingham town,
In the morning, on June 25,
When there came into town an old beggar in rags,
Who was lame, and seemed barely alive.

Unnoticed, the beggar passed through the wide gates;
Unnoticed, he limped to the square;   square--center of
Unnoticed, he listened; Unnoticed, he looked   town
At the crowd that was gathering there.

For that morning the center of Nottingham town
With many sad people was filled.
They had come into town, not to buy or to sell,
But to see three brave outlaws be killed.

No happy "Hurrah's" were that day to be heard,
"Twas as silent as silent could be--
Just the blood chilling noise that the carpenters made
As they finished a scaffold for three.   scaffold--platform
    used for hanging

"Pray tell, what will happen? Pray tell, who will hang?"
Through the silence the beggar's voice rang.
"For I see three nooses, and I see three ropes,   nooses--rope
But where are the three who will hang?"   loops used for
    hanging

No one answered the beggar, but out of the crowd
His Majesty's Sheriff appeared;
A coward, this Sheriff of Nottingham town,
But a man who was hated and feared.

"I've three men in jail now, all ready to hang.
They're Robin Hood's outlaws," he said.
"They've laughed their last laugh, and they've had their
last meal.
Now they'll hang by their necks until dead."

"They'd be hanging by now, but my hangman has quit,
And nobody else wants the job.
If you want it, old beggar, it's jolly good work,
Though you're here to pick pockets and rob."

"Pray tell," asked the beggar, "just what have they done,
That their days should be ended this way?
Just who have they murdered, just who have they killed,
That their lives should be taken today?"

Said the Sheriff, "They've killed some fine deer of the King,
And on this point the King's law is clear;
He shall hang by his neck from the end of a rope,
Who dares to pursue the King's deer."

pursue--chase

"Pray tell," asked the beggar, "just what is the pay?
Just what will I get for this deed?
For here is a job no good townsman will have,
And you see I am badly in need."

"Their clothes," said the Sheriff, "the hangman can have,
From the tops of their heads to their toes,
Including the gold that their pockets might hold--
And you surely could use some new clothes!"

"That I could," said the beggar, regarding his rags.
"That I could," he repeated again.
Then he stared at the Sheriff, and stared at the crowd,
And he said, "I will hang your three men."

regarding--looking at

"Hurrah!" cried the Sheriff. "Let justice be done!
These three outlaws will now get their due.
My only regret is that bold Robin Hood
Is not in my jail to hang, too!"

due--what is coming to a person

The crowd, open-mouthed, now grew silent and pale,
And drew back from the hangman in fear.
Disguised as a beggar, cruel Death, dressed in rags,
Had just limped into Nottinghamshire.

From the jail came the outlaws, surrounded by guards;
From the crowd came a frightening sigh;
From the Sheriff came orders to "Hurry up, now";
From the outlaws, no sign they would die.

Up the stairs to the gallows the three outlaws climbed.
The hangman was already there.
They made jokes as the hangman regarded their clothes
And fitted their nooses with care.

gallows--the wooden beam from which people were hanged

On the head of the first went a black mask of death,
And the hangman spoke low in his ear.
"What's that talking up there?" called the Sheriff, upset,
"If you talk, talk so I, too, can hear!"

"The hangman was telling me just how to fall,"
Came a voice from behind the black mask.
"The law says you can't hang me twice if I live,
So your hangman's just doing his task."

On the head of the next went the black mask of death
And a whisper shot into the air.
"No talking up there!" called the Sheriff. "That's that!
Let the beggar now speak, if he dare."

"The hangman was telling me just how to stand,"
The second doomed man shouted down. doomed--supposed to
"For if he pulls the handle, and I fail to die, be killed
You'll be laughed at and run out of town."

On the head of the third went the black mask of death,
And a third time the beggar's lips spoke.
"I said no more talking!" the Sheriff exclaimed.
"Do you think, when I speak, it's a joke?"

"The hangman was telling me just how to breathe,"
The third of the outlaws let fall. let fall--said; let
"For if I breathe out when I should have fall on the air
breathed in,
You'll lose me for once and for all."

The outlaws were ready; the hangman was set;
The handle he held in his hand
That would open the door in the scaffold's high floor,
On which the three outlaws did stand.

The Sheriff looked up at the beggar above,
As the silence of death filled the air.
The beggar looked down at the Sheriff below;
Not a sound could be heard in the square.

They stood there a moment, not moving a hair,
Till the Sheriff leaned back and yelled, "Now!"
But the Sheriff was startled, when high up above,
The beggar leaped up and yelled, "Wow!"

The beggar stood up to his natural height,
And with three hurried swings of his knife
He cut the three nooses around the three necks
Of three men, who were brought back to life.

"Hurrah!" the crowd hollered; "Hurray!" the crowd yelled.
"It's Robin up there, can't you see?
He's dressed as a beggar! Now off come his rags!
And the men, they're not hanged, but they're free!"

Then down from the scaffold jumped three grateful men,
And the hero who'd rescued them, too.
The crowd closed around them as tight as a fist,
So the Sheriff's men couldn't get through.

The Sheriff, so angry, yelled, "Out of the way!"
But the outlaws had now crossed the square,
And were making their way toward the gates of the town,
And the horses that stood waiting there.

How they laughed as they galloped away from the town!
How they joked as they ate the King's deer!
How they cheered and they cheered that good man, Robin Hood,
The bold outlaw of Nottinghamshire.

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